

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Fine Line Productions

Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center

#### Fine Line Production Journeys Toward Excellence

##### Client Profile:

Fine Line Production, located in Euless, Texas, manufactures a wide range of fabricated metal products including metal stampings, steel springs, fabricated metal products, and progressive compound stamping dies. The company, started in 1985, is family owned and operated. Customers include Trinity Industries, Frito-Lay, General Dynamics, Nautilus and Siemens. Fine Line currently employs 32 people.

##### Situation:

Fine Line had been feeling the effects of a depressed economy for the past few years. Then, in part as a result of increased off-shore outsourcing, they experienced a decrease in the number of orders. In 2001, Vice President of Operations, Gerard Smith, read about the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, in a local newsletter. Gerard was looking for ideas and resources to help him improve his company's performance and profitability. During this time, turn-over was high and they were experiencing a lot of difficulty in finding and keeping good tooling personnel. The delays in tooling along with other shop issues contributed to numerous delays in customer orders. Smith decided to contact TMAC.

##### Solution:

TMAC started with a detailed business assessment and provided their findings to the Fine Line management team. Several improvement opportunities were immediately identified. Fine Line and TMAC agreed upon a systematic approach to implementing the various process improvements. Initially, Fine Line sent a team to participate in the Journey to Excellence (JTE), a 32-week series of workshops developed by TMAC and the North Texas Small Business Development Center. JTE offers a methodology for transforming an organization to world class. As Fine Line began absorbing the concepts, a business coaching relationship developed with TMAC. In 2002 Fine Line launched an ISO 9001:2000 conversion project. This project, along with the continued business coaching and various other training opportunities, began to have an impact on company performance. Fine Line management began to measure and manage their company's performance and the success began to build upon itself. Fine Line Production is well positioned to pursue new opportunities.

##### Results:

- \* Improved manufacturing systems, including reduced lead time, increased throughput, reduced WIP inventory and reduced defect rate.
- \* Improved position in the market place.
- \* Improved working environment and employee morale.
- \* Enhanced employee skills.

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- \* Reduced employee turnover.
- \* Business/strategic planning focused on sales and costs.
- \* Increased sales by \$400,000.
- \* Retained sales of \$200,000.
- \* Saved \$18,000 in costs annually.
- \* Created 6 new jobs; retained 6 jobs.
- \* Capital investments of over \$200,000.

### **Testimonial:**

"The true value of TMAC and the MEP network is the ability for small manufacturers to access a wealth of consultive knowledge at a cost they can absorb. Consultants of the caliber employed with MEP are primarily available only to large manufacturers. These larger manufacturers then award their contracts to offshore foreign suppliers for higher profits rather than use their American counterparts. TMAC has literally saved thousands of American jobs in Texas by offering their services and products to smaller manufacturers like Fine Line who in turn are able to become more productive and competitive."

Gerard Smith, President